



Mike Smith

September 3, 1938 - April 21, 2025

Michael "Mike" Arnold Smith passed away on April 21, 2025, holding hands with his beloved wife of 61 years, Debbie, and daughter, Whitney, after an accident. He was 86 years old. Mike was born in Valdosta, Georgia on September 8, 1938. Arguably, that was 100 years too late as he was born to be a cowboy. He spent his childhood summers, along with the other 'river rats,' at the Old Camp House at Arnold Springs on the Withlacoochee River. School never really agreed with him and he famously (in family lore, anyway) attended three colleges in as many years. However, his true education began following the irresistible offering of a free physical that prompted a 21-year-old Mike, who had never been in a plane, to enlist in the United States Air Force and become a pilot. Long before the fictional characters of Top Gun, he trained on a T-37 TweetyBird and F-80 Shooting Star and later flew the B-47 Stratojet. He served the USAF as part of Strategic Air Command during the tense days of the Cuban Missile Crisis.

It was during his time stationed at the Little Rock Air Force Base that he met a local girl named Debbie who would become his lifelong partner. Their honeymoon to Atlanta included an interview with Delta Airlines, where he worked for 34 years. He became a Captain and commanded the DC-9, B-727, B-757, B-767 aircraft; but his favorite was always the L-1011. Rank allowed him to delegate the duties associated with in-flight announcements to the 2nd officer. Mike, with his thick Southern drawl, was known for his unhurried

announcements, often deliberately(?) mispronouncing words, much to the amusement of his passengers. He also served in the Alabama Air National Guard in Montgomery.

His Delta career allowed him time to pursue his real passions - farming and ranching. He loved his farm, The Lazy S, dearly. He spoke proudly - but never boastfully - about his cattle as any parent would about their children. Orbit, Star, Vindicator, Osceola, Dudley, Herman, and Beauregarde were a few of his favorite bulls. Today, Louie can be found standing watch at his place by the gate. Despite several grandchildren he adored, his phone's screen saver was always a picture of his cherished cows.

Mike also LOVED dogs. A farm provides an opportunity for a man to have as many dogs as he can feed. It also creates a natural adoption agency for people. Mike adopted more dogs and took in more strays than an animal shelter. He had some good English Pointers when quail were around, but most were of dubious and mixed lineage. A few of the better ones were Henry, Simon, Mack, Jake, Buck, Ritz, Moreover, Dog, New Dog, Meg, Torp, Delta, Ace, Curley, Duke, Cajun, Sundance, Jambo, Rosie, Mimi, Mally, Sol-leks, Rex, Lady, Rat and Hank. He is survived by two faithful hounds, Max and Sadie.

He loved simple things like a quiet sunrise sitting on the porch, the reflection of the pond on a calm day, a nice breeze, or watching the martins fly home every year. He loved growing his mom's Camellias and appreciated beauty in common things the majority of people take for granted. With a sentimental soul, he kept every card a loved one sent him and found meaning in the words of poems and in his favorite country music lyrics. He had a boyish habit of gently teasing people in a good-natured way and found humor in everything. His curiosity was endless as was his generosity and kindness.

Most of all, Mike Smith loved his family and community - his wife (Debbie),

sister (Nancy "Honey"), daughter (Whitney), son (Jeff), grandson (Jack), granddaughters (Sam & Maggie, Jane, Audrey), nieces, nephews, and so many friends it is hard to comprehend, much less try and list. You know who you are and you know he loved you.

He was a proud member of the Georgia Cattlemen's and The Southeastern Red Angus Associations and was inducted into the Cattlemen's Hall of Fame in 2016. He was a man of strong faith as a member of the First United Methodist Church and cherished his daily devotional readings. He had even received a Screen Actors Guild card recently for his "acting work" in a commercial filmed on his farm. He is survived by everyone who knew him as we suspect he enriched your life to some degree. Don't be sad about Mike Smith's passing. He "went out with his boots on" as all good cowboys should and will remain eternally undefeated against his grandson in Cornhole, 56-0.

A celebration of life for Mike will be held at McKoon Funeral Home in Newnan, GA, on Saturday, May 17, 2025, from 3:00-6:00.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks you to consider making a charitable gift to someone in need, as that is what Mike so often did

.

A few of the charities he supported are: St. Jude's Hospital

https://fundraising.stjude.org/site/TR?px=8804949&fr_id=154020&pg=personal

First United Methodist Church <https://onrealm.org/newnanfumc/-/form/give/now>

w

Child Fund International 1-800-776-6767 St. Joseph's Indian School www.stjo.org/rec

Condolences may be expressed to the family online at www.mckoon.com.

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory 770-253-4580

Cemetery Details

McKoon Funeral Home & Crematory

38 Jackson Street
Newnan, GA 30263
care@mckoon.com
<http://www.mckoon.com>

Previous Events

Visitation

MAY 17. 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

McKoon Funeral Home
38 Jackson Street
Newnan, GA 30263

Tribute Wall

MK

“ Believe

It or not but I flew with Mike 50 years ago. My roommate and I flew on many trips with Mike to the West coast on the 747 .Mike was a true Southern Gentleman. We would all talk on the trips and I was shocked to learn that Mike had graduated from Valdosta High School. I had taught school there after I graduated from Georgia Southern university. He also knew the boy from Valdosta that I was dating in Atl and later married for 48 years before he died three years ago. Mike would give a tour of the land we flew over on the intercon on the plane with his Southern accent and the passengers would love it. I am truly sorry for your loss because he was one of the good guys

Reminded me of meeting John Wayne.

He taught about the girl that he saw at the University of Arkansas and I believe he said that his wife was a cheerleader at the University.

Margaret Leslie Knight - June 08, 2025 at 08:35 PM

JG

“ *Lovely man, beautiful family, so welcoming and loving, spent Christmas 1991 at Lazy S Farm. Joyful memories. Condolences Whit, Jimmy G.*

james greenway - June 07, 2025 at 12:33 AM

DA

“ *Oh my gosh so sorry to hear about Mike. Praying for you and family.*

Dolores awbrey - May 16, 2025 at 11:18 AM

JR

“ I'm going to miss seeing Mr. Smith on his tractor and waving. my heart is so very sad.

Jane Attaway Gore West Grantville road - May 15, 2025 at 10:57 PM

JM

“ Thank you, Mike. You brought Chris and me to Coweta County. You and I were so close in seniority that we only flew together a few times. We understood and liked each other from the start. We had a lot in common. We were about the seem age and we were both former military pilots. There was no fake or phony airs about the man; what you saw was what you got. We both loved the western US except for California. He loved cows, and I love them medium rare. I'll be seeing you when I get there. “A cowboy never says goodbye, it's not in his nature.” – Kurt Philip Behm

Jack B. McBride - May 13, 2025 at 07:20 PM

CO

“ Dear Debbie and family, I am so sorry for your loss. Mike was always a fun guy to fly with. He will be missed. Clint Odom

clint odom - May 11, 2025 at 12:58 PM

VG

“ Dearest Debbie and family, so sorry about your loss...i know Mike was a very kind and sweet soul..i am sure he will be missed by all who knew him...my prayer for you is that your grief in time will change into sweet, sweet memories...love , velma Gulick

Velma Gulick - May 08, 2025 at 08:44 PM

JW

“ Joy Williams lit a candle in memory of Mike Smith



Joy Williams - May 08, 2025 at 08:07 PM

SW

“ *“ Mikey and Smitty” the two bulls we got from Mr. Mike are what has made our herd what it is today. Our thoughts and prayers are with ya’ll during this difficult time. Love Susan and Ronnie Whatley*

Susan Whatley - May 08, 2025 at 06:30 PM

RQ

“ *I am so very sorry for your loss. You are all in my thoughts and prayers. Robin Ann Quick*



Robin Ann Quick - May 08, 2025 at 05:06 PM

GW

“ *What a beautiful obituary which epitomizes the life Mike lived! It’s been years since we visited so often when Jeff and Jon were growing up, but I will never forget his kind and gentle manner and his humor. The world has lost a wonderful soul but thankfully he will be remembered as the genuine man he was, never fake. My condolences to you Debbie as well as to the rest of the family.*



Geraldine Welch - May 08, 2025 at 04:17 PM

JE

“ Whitney and family I am so sorry to hear about your families loss. You have been in my thoughts, and prayers since the accident happened. This wonderful obituary let's those of us that didn't know him see what a wonderful guy he was!! I will continue to pray for all of you during this difficult time. RIP sir you have served your country and community well.



Jamie Hixson SRO Moreland Elementary - May 08, 2025 at 12:49 PM